

## MOVING ON TO MATURITY

He Calls You Brother

Hebrews 2:10-18

I take offense when Jesus is belittled with sacrilegious nicknames, when the One who is the “radiance of God’s glory and the exact representation of his being” is trivialized. When the One “who sustains all things by his powerful word” is joked about. When the One who has on his “robe and on his thigh the name written KING OF KINGS AND LORD OF LORDS” is treated casually. I am offended when anyone calls Jesus, who is the Image of the Invisible God, “the man upstairs.” And, until studying the passage of this morning’s sermon, I was uncomfortable when anyone called Jesus “our Elder Brother.” Yes, usually the phrase was spoken with reverence. But, still, it just seemed too....familiar. Too folksy. Too chummy. Too unbiblical.

But, my friends, the text of our sermon today, Hebrews 2:10-18, has taken me to school. Through it, I have discovered it’s okay to call Jesus “my brother” because he is the one who called me “brother” first. In Hebrews 2:10-18 we will see displayed this truth: **Jesus entered into the human family. So he is able to be your Brother, your Savior, and your High Priest.** Let’s look at the first paragraph, verses 10-13:

### **Jesus entered into the human family, so...**

#### **1. He is able to be your brother who proudly claims you as his brother (2:10-13)**

*In bringing many sons to glory, it was fitting that God, for whom and through whom everything exists, should make the author of their salvation perfect through suffering. Both the one who makes men holy and those who are made holy are of the same family. So Jesus is not ashamed to call them brothers. He says, “I will declare your name to my brothers; in the presence of the congregation I will sing your praises.” And again, “I will put my trust in him.” And again he says, “Here am I, and the children God has given me.”*

Verse 10 divulges some of the plan of the Sovereign God, “for whom and through whom everything exists.” God’s plan is to bring “many sons (that’s us) to glory (that’s heaven)” but to do so will require the “author (or leader-captain-originator) of their salvation” (that’s Jesus His Son) to be made “perfect through suffering.” Of course, Jesus was never imperfect, but his ability to be our Savior was perfected by walking a path that led through suffering, climaxing in the Crucifixion. He was qualified to save by his sacrificial suffering. “*God made him who had no sin to be sin for us, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God*” (2 Corinthians 5:21).

Verse 11 says he is the One who makes men holy. Through Jesus being human, both “he who makes men holy”—that is, Jesus—and those “who are made holy”—that is, we who have trusted Jesus for our salvation—are “of the same family.” Imagine that! John 1:12 says the same thing: “*To as many as received him, he gave the right to become children of God, even to those who believe on his name.*” Here, according to verse 11, if you are a son of God by having received Jesus, Jesus and you are “of the same family.”

Because both Jesus and those he sets apart share the same Father, the writer comes to this mind-bending conclusion: “he is not ashamed to call them brothers.” Two different Scriptures from the

Old Testament are given as proof. Through the Holy Spirit, the writer declares these words originally spoken by David (vs. 12) and Isaiah (vs. 13), were actually speaking Messianic prophecies. These O.T. prophets' words, spoken in each writer's own life contexts, were also a mouthpiece to deliver words in behalf of Messiah.

The first quotation, which according to verse 12 comes from Jesus, is when David wrote Psalm 22:22. You probably remember Psalm 22 as the Messianic Psalm that predicts in excruciating precision the account of the Crucifixion:

- Psalm 22 begins with the very words Christ cried from the cross, "My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?"
- Psalm 22 continues in its Messianic prophecy about the Crucifixion, including quoting those who mocked him, "He trusts in the Lord, let the Lord rescue him."
- Psalm 22 recounts the fact "all my bones are out of joint" and
- "they have pierced my hands and my feet" and
- "they divide my garments among them and cast lots for my clothing."
- Finally Psalm 22 arrives at verse 22. According to Hebrews 2, this verse also comes not just from the pen of David, but from the mouth of Messiah. It is the pivot point of the Messianic Psalm when it turns from the Suffering Sacrifice to the Triumphant Son of God: "I will declare your name to my brothers; in the congregation I will praise you."

He calls you "brother" publicly, in the congregation (*ekklesia* in the LXX which is usually translated church in the N.T.). Jesus calls you "brother."

In verse 13 he similarly quotes Isaiah's statement about his family (Isaiah 8:17-18), to indicate he also speaks for Messiah:

- *"I will put my trust in him. Here am I, and the children God has given me."*

Isaiah speaks of his own children, and Jesus speaks of God's children who have been entrusted to him.

Who is this One who calls you brother? How has Hebrews described him so far? In the first four verses of the book, the writer describes the Son as the heir of all things, the creator of the universe, the radiance of God's glory, the exact representation of his being, the one who sustains all creation with a powerful word and the one who is seated at the right hand of the Father. Jesus, the Son of God, is God - absolutely sovereign, righteous, eternal and unchanging. That's who "he" is who calls you brother. He is God. He is your Savior and Lord, but he is also your brother.

Perhaps even more astoundingly, he is not the least bit ashamed of you. This sovereign, righteous, eternal, unchanging absolutely holy God-who-is-man does not turn away from you in shame. You cause him no embarrassment or disgrace. In fact, quite the opposite is true. If he is not ashamed, what is he? The writer here is not using a negative to point out a neutral. He's using a negative to point out a positive. He's saying Jesus is not ashamed of you in order to point out Jesus is proud of you. How can this be? How can this not be! He's our brother! We share the same Father. And he has made us holy in his sight, cleansed us from sin and set us apart for eternity's purposes.

More astoundingly still, he's not ashamed to "call" you brother. He doesn't just think it; he speaks it. He doesn't just speak it when no one is listening; he speaks it in the middle of the assembly. He not only wants you to know he's proud of you; he wants others to know as well.

I have an older brother named Lynn. He is 6 years older than me. Six years isn't much difference now, but it was huge when he was a senior in high school, and I was a 6th grader. Out of the hundreds and thousands of days that make up the landscape of my memories of growing up, one day stands out in particular. My brother, a senior in high school, invited me, a 6th grader, to go with him and his friends to see a football game. My brother and I got into our old '49 Plymouth and he drove around picking up his high school pals to go together to the football game. The last teen to pile into the car looked back at me and asked, "Who's the shrimp?" And I'll never forget what my big brother said, "That's my brother Reilly. He's okay." Imagine that! A cool senior saying his little kid brother is okay!

But imagine this too! Jesus walks into the middle of our gathering. He asks each of us to stand one by one. Looking us each in the eye he proudly speaks to everyone, "This is my brother; he's okay. This is my sister. She's okay." All the while he's bursting with pride and joy.

This is a different way to think of Jesus, isn't it? If we can use the lens of this Scripture to get Jesus in focus, we'll hear him calling us brothers. And if we can hear him doing so, it will change the way we think about him, about ourselves, and about God.

As we come next to verses 14-16 we see yet another benefit arising from the Son of God entering into the human family.

## **Jesus entered into the human family, so...**

### **2. He is able to be your Savior who frees you from fear of death (2:14-16)**

*Since the children have flesh and blood, he too shared in their humanity so that by his death he might destroy him who holds the power of death—that is, the devil—and free those who all their lives were held in slavery by their fear of death. For surely it is not angels he helps, but Abraham's descendants.*

You might ask? "How did Satan get the power of death?" By inducing our race into sin, for God had warned concerning eating from the tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil, "The day you eat of it, you shall die." Adam and Eve ate, and their spirit died and their bodies began to die. "The wages of sin is death." And so death stalks us all from man's first sin until today, because "all of have sinned." But Jesus has come to "destroy" (NIV) Satan. The word used here (*katargeo*) is used 27 times in the N.T. and is translated various ways. It may mean "to abolish" or "to nullify," "to paralyze" or as here in the NAS, "to render ineffective." Satan is still around, but Jesus has rendered Satan powerless.

How did Jesus do this? Verse 14 begins with a conjunction that draws us toward a conclusion. "Since" begins the sentence, and "so that" concludes something from it. "Since" we children in the human family have "flesh and blood," he too had to share in that same kind of humanity, in "flesh and blood." Why? So that he might die and, thereby, "render powerless" (NAS) him who holds the power of death—that is, the devil.

Here we have the **logical theology** of the Gospel on display. Christ had to be both God and man. If he were just God, he could not die. If he was just man, his death would have been meaningless.

But, being God and man, his death is redemptive. Being God, his death could pay an infinite price, the penalty of sin for millions of believers. Being man, he could actually die.

C.S. Lewis in chapter 15 of *The Lion, the Witch, and the Wardrobe* calls this transaction “deep magic.” You may recall the scene. Aslan, the lion who represents Christ, has willingly allowed the Witch, representing Satan, to kill him upon the Stone Table. But after his sacrificial death in exchange for the sinful, traitor human boy Edmund, the stone table has broken in two and Aslan has come back to life. Aslan explains the Gospel to the girl, Susan:

*But what does it all mean?” asked Susan when they were somewhat calmer. “It means,” said Aslan, “that though the Witch knew the Deep Magic, there is a magic deeper still which she did not know. Her knowledge goes back only to the dawn of Time. But if she could have looked a little further back, into the stillness and the darkness before Time dawned, she would have read there a different incantation. She would have known that when a willing victim who had committed no treachery was killed in a traitor’s stead, the Table would crack and Death itself would start working backwards.”*

C. S. Lewis’ writings are not inspired. Nevertheless, his allagory parrallels with the truth of Hebrews 2:14-15.

*Since the children have flesh and blood, he too shared in their humanity so that by his death he might destroy him who holds the power of death—that is, the devil—and free those who all their lives were held in slavery by their fear of death.*

Jesus entered into the human family, so he is able to be your Savior. As Savior, Jesus frees you from fear of death (2:14-16).

Death is inevitable and uncontrollable. It is out of our hands; it can happen at any time. So the big question looms in each mind: “After death, then what?” The question inspires fear.

Most of us know the Jungle Book from the Disney sanitized version. In Rudyard Kipling’s original, Mowgli, the small boy raised in the jungle, asks the animals what’s the most feared thing in the jungle. He’s told that when two animals meet on a narrow path one must step aside and let the other pass. The animal that steps aside for no one would then be the most feared. Mowgli wants to know what kind of animal would that be? One tells him it’s an elephant. Another tells him it’s a lion. Finally the wise old owl exclaims, “The most feared thing in the jungle is death. It steps aside for no one.”

Many of would agree with actor and director Woody Allen who said, “I am not afraid to die. I just don’t want to be there when it happens.”

There’s an old story of the three guys at the coffee shop. They had been to a funeral of a friend. Their conversation turned to their own eventual funerals. One asked his friends, “What would you like people to say about you at your funeral?” One responded, “I’d like them to say, “He earned a lot of money and gave generously to charity.” The friend who initiated the conversation replied, “I’d like them to say, “He was a great husband and father.” They nodded in agreement and looked to the third buddy who’d been silent. Finally he concluded, “I’d like them to say, “Look, he’s moving!”

Most of us have a strong will to live. That is the way it should be. That is the way God created us instinctively. That strong will to live helped an elderly woman, lost in the Wallawa Mountains, to eat berries and find water to survive until rescued after two weeks. That desire to live can sustain a teen through excruciatingly painful rounds of chemo until lymphoma is beaten into remission.

But for many of us, competing with the will to live is the desire to die. For those who struggle with ongoing depression, it takes courage to live each day. To those of us who are chronically depressed, I commend you for not giving in to the desire for self-destruction. I champion your cause as you continue to resist death and to stay here with us for the sake of your friends, family, and the God-given purpose for your life, even when that purpose seems unclear. We need you among us; we want you with us. Do not give into the Satanic desires to destroy.

But for many of us there is a fear of death. Fear of death comes from two sources, but if you are a believer in Christ, these two fear factors should be able to be laid aside: uncertainty and judgment.

**Fear Factor #1 is Uncertainty in the Process.** We wonder, after we breathe our last breath, then what? The fear of uncertainty is answered by faith in what God has said. God's Word is clear for us:

*"Now we know that if the earthly tent we live in is destroyed, we have a building from God, an eternal house in heavens, not built by human hands. Meanwhile we groan, longing to be clothed with our heavenly dwelling...For while we are in this tent, we groan and are burdened...Now it is God who has made us for this very purpose and has given us the Spirit as a deposit, guaranteeing what is to come. Therefore, we are always confident and know that as long as we are at home in the body we are away from the Lord. We live by faith, not by sight. We are confident, I say, and would prefer to be absent from the body and at home with the Lord." (2 Corinthians 5:1-9)*

The awareness of my own mortality is heightened when I visit cemeteries. My favorite one to visit is the Lone Fir Pioneer Cemetery along SE Morrison between SE 21st and 25th. Reading the tombstones there is something like reading a Portland street map, for buried there is Lovejoy, Hawthorne, Northrup, and Shattuck. But more than the famous names, I like reading about the common people buried there who died with their Christian faith erasing their uncertainties:

- John Stein born Feb. 25, 1866. Died June 14, 1908 (at age 42) "Farewell my wife and children all, from you a father Christ doth call.
- Mary Adell Read Hunter is commemorated with a 6' ornate stone: died Aug. 29, 1894 (age 33 years). "Resting till the resurrection morn."
- And there is the silent witness to a family's grief in two small headstones. The first, ironically, I had to wipe off to read the words, "Gone, but not forgotten." It belonged to little Dicky Sperry. Died Jan. 13, 1871, age 9 months, 3 days. Next to him their daughter, Jessie Sperry. Died June 21, 1880. 6 months, 19 days. The immense grief of these parents found expression in the certain faith of resurrection: "Sweet Jessie unto earth a little while was given. She plumed her wings for flight, and then soared ahead to heaven."

Jesus says, “I am the resurrection and the life. He that lives and believes in me shall never die.” There is no need for uncertainty where faith lives. Uncertainty is answered by faith in the truth of God’s Word.

**Fear Factor #2 is fear of Judgment for sin.** Indeed, Hebrews 9:27 says “*It is appointed for men to die once and after this comes judgment.*” But for the believer, the judgment has already been taken away because Jesus has made atonement or payment for your sin. This truth is proclaimed in the next paragraph of verses 17-18.

**Jesus entered into the human family, so...**

**3. He is able to be your High Priest  
who makes atonement for your sins (2:17-18).**

*For this reason he had to be made like his brothers in every way, in order that he might become a merciful and faithful high priest in service to God, and that he might make atonement for the sins of the people. Because he himself suffered when he was tempted, he is able to help those who are being tempted.*

The writer for the first time directly introduces one of the main themes of his book, the priesthood of Christ. We will have much more to say on this subject in future sermons. Today, we will mention only the fact that, as High Priest, Jesus made atonement for your sin. So you need not fear judgment after death. In the previous section, Jesus purpose for coming was to render the devil powerless and free his brothers from fear of death. Here, his purpose for coming is explained as becoming a high priest to make atonement for the sins of his brothers. The two purposes are related. He is able to free us from the fear of judgment because as High Priest he has made atonement for your sin.

Romans 8:1 responds to the fear of death that comes from a fear of judgment: “There is, therefore, no condemnation to those who are in Christ Jesus.”

The question then is so pointed: Are you in Christ Jesus? Have you ever placed yourself in him by faith. Have you stepped into Christ—including your sins, and your past, and your present, and your future—have you stepped into Christ, finding refuge in Him? One hymn alludes to the incident in the life of Moses when God sheltered him in a cleft in the rock while God’s awesome glory passed by. The hymn Rock of Ages compares Jesus to that rock:

*Rock of Ages, cleft for me, Let me hide myself in Thee  
Let the water and the blood, from Thy pierced side which flowed  
Be of sin the double cure: cleanse me from its guilt and pow’r.*

*Nothing in my hand I bring, simply to Thy cross I cling  
Naked, come to Thee for dress. Helpless, look to Thee for grace.  
Foul, I to the fountain fly, wash me Savior or I die!*

*While I draw this fleeting breath, when my eyes shall close in death,  
When I soar to worlds unknown, see Thee on Thy glorious throne,  
Rock of Ages, cleft for me, let me hide myself in Thee.*

We who are in Christ Jesus, who have placed our faith within that Rock of Ages, need not fear death because we will not be judged for our sin. It is forgiven. And because we need not fear judgment, neither do we need to live tight, narrow, restrictive lives in constant peril of doing the wrong thing, making the wrong decision or taking the wrong turn. Jesus, through his death, freed us from the fear of death.

Whenever that moment approaches, if Christ is your Brother, Savior, Priest, you do not need to be afraid. Perhaps your last conscious moment will be alone in the dark of a nursing home room. Or your last conscious moment might be while counting backwards as you go under for surgery. Or it might be the split second you have to realize the oncoming car has crossed the centerline.

Brothers and sisters within the eternal family of God, let me assure you. When that time comes when your body's life ends here, you do not need to be afraid! Christ will meet you at the end of the Valley of the Shadow of Death.

**Fear of uncertainty** has been answered by faith in what God has said, "Absent from the body, present with the Lord."

**Fear of judgment** has been absorbed by what God has done: "There is therefore now, no condemnation to those who are in Christ Jesus."

God has sent Jesus, made like his brothers in every way—Jesus: our Brother, our Savior, and our High Priest.